

Office of the
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of Education

**Public
School Information**

**2014
Legislative
Report**

**Idaho
Reading
Initiative (IRI)**

*Contact:
Stephanie Lee
Assessment Specialist
Idaho State Department of Education
slee@sde.idaho.gov
(208) 332-6903*

Idaho Reading Initiative (IRI)

IDAHO CODE AND PURPOSE OF IRI

Idaho Code 33-1614 requires K-3 students in Idaho to be assessed as they develop critical reading skills. The purpose of the assessment, the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI), is to identify students who do not have the skills that are a prerequisite for creating successful, grade-level readers as soon as possible. As is written in the statute, “the state K-3 assessment test results shall be reviewed by school personnel for the purpose of providing necessary interventions to sustain or improve the students’ reading skills.”

BACKGROUND OF THE IRI SELECTION

In 2005, based on recommendations from the IRI Steering Committee, the Idaho State Department of Education decided that the current IRI needed to be revised. This decision was made in light of new reading research on assessing critical skills indicating reading difficulties, as well as issues with test familiarity and test security. At that time, a request for information was sent to several testing companies asking them to provide information for a short benchmark test that would coincide with the Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Plan.

Since 2007, the Department has utilized AIMSweb to house the IRI data and provide progress monitoring for schools with grades K-3 in Idaho. AIMSweb was first utilized in Idaho by the special education division due to the program’s ability not only to identify a student’s reading proficiency, but also to monitor the progress of children’s reading development on a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis, allowing teachers to set how frequently they monitor. This program is also a tool for the Response to Intervention (RTI) model being used in Idaho schools to gather standard data over time and monitor at-risk students’ reading growth.

The state will continue to ensure the IRI is a safe and secure assessment. The 2013-2014 IRI will continue to use the unique benchmark passages created exclusively for Idaho by the authors of AIMSweb. AIMSweb has guaranteed that the assessments purchased by the Department are valid and reliable when compared to their national assessment.

RESULTS OF THE 2012-2013 IRI

Scores from Spring 2013 IRI showed Idaho students improved their reading skills throughout the 2012-2013 school year. In kindergarten, for example, the number of students who reached grade-level in reading increased from 56 percent in the fall to 82 percent in the spring. In third grade, the number of students who reached grade level jumped from 64 percent in the fall to 76 percent in the spring.

Student Achievement – A review of student achievement continues to show gains since the start of the initiative including:

- The number of students scoring below grade level has dropped significantly since implementation of the reading initiative. In the fall of 2001, 11,477 students scored below grade level and in fall of 2012, 9,113 students scored below grade level. This is a significant difference comparing to 2001-2002 there were 69,715 k-3 students and in 2012-2013 there were over 88,000 students k-3 tested on the Idaho Reading Indicator.

- Statewide the greatest progress was made in kindergarten where there was an increase of 27% from fall to spring among children reading on grade level. Among exiting kindergarteners, only 6% scored below grade level.
- In kindergarten, Hispanic students demonstrated the highest rate of growth among ethnic categories. The number of Hispanic children scoring on grade level increased by 48% from fall to spring. American Indian or Alaskan Native students' scores increased by 30%.
- LEP (Limited English Proficient) students' showed the highest rate of growth among the ethnic groups, increasing 55% from fall to spring.
- Third grade had the greatest need for improving the percentage of students reading at grade level, and third grade students have made the most significant improvement since the implementation of the Reading Indicator.

Idaho's teachers, parents, legislators, and administrators are continuing to make reading achievement a priority. Since the development of the IRI, Idaho has shown marked improvement in the number of students reading at grade level before they go on to fourth grade.

Comparison of the Percent of Students who scored at Benchmark

FALL 2012 - SPRING 2013

Grade	Fall 2012	Spring 2013
Kindergarten	<i>56 percent</i>	<i>82 percent</i>
1st Grade	<i>64 percent</i>	<i>72 percent</i>
2nd Grade	<i>54 percent</i>	<i>71 percent</i>
3rd Grade*	<i>64 percent</i>	<i>76 percent</i>

SPRING 2000- SPRING 2013

Grade	Spring 2000	Spring 2013
Kindergarten	<i>57 percent</i>	<i>82 percent</i>
1st Grade	<i>52 percent</i>	<i>72 percent</i>
2nd Grade	<i>53 percent</i>	<i>71 percent</i>
3rd Grade	<i>49 percent</i>	<i>76 percent</i>

Student achievement in early reading skills and fluency has required team work and dedication from teachers, administrators, students, parents, as well as the dedicated universities and agencies in Idaho. The Idaho State Library Association along with many of Idaho's pre-school programs have also worked with the state to improve reading achievement by understanding the skills assessed and offering programs to support and develop these skills, as well as other critical skills outlined by the Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Plan.

CONTINUED MODIFICATIONS TO THE IRI

Idaho Reading Indicator Assessment Program for the 2012-2013 School Year:

Due to an overall reduction to the allocation of the funds for the Idaho Reading Initiative in the 2009-2010 school year, changes were made to the IRI assessment practices. In the 2012-2013 school year, funding has remained flat year over year. Therefore, the changes that were implemented in 2009-2010 school year have remained in place for the 2012-2013 school year. The goal of the Idaho State Department of Education and the IRI Steering Committee was not to reduce the intervention dollars that have the most positive impact on student achievement. The changes that were implemented keep

intervention funding from decreasing a significant amount while still providing funding for testing K-3 students in fall and spring.

- The Winter IRI continues to be an option, but not a requirement, for districts. The Department highly recommends that trained school personnel assess those students “at risk” during the winter. Districts have the option to use any progress monitoring tool probes or use the state’s unique benchmarks. If the district chooses to use the Idaho benchmarks then they must remain secure and follow the same assessment rules as fall and spring. If the districts choose to use their progress monitoring probes, classroom teachers would have the opportunity to be involved in the assessment as long as it can be spread over time and not take away from long periods of instructional time. Winter data may still be entered into the IRI system, so students will have comprehensive results for teachers and administrators to view in class reports and individual schools and districts to use the data.
- Program reimbursement funds remain the same. Testing reimbursement for the IRI test administration will remain at **\$2.55** per student K-3. Extended Reading Intervention funding will be **\$94.60** per 1 (intensive) student on the fall test and **\$24.00** for pupil transportation.
- In 2012-2013, the Department decided not to renew its contract with AIMSweb. Instead, the Department created its own site to house IRI data internally versus continuing to use an outside vendor. All K-3 schools will enter fall and spring IRI data onto the new IRI Web Application. The decision to not continue the contract with AIMSweb is saving the state more than \$145,000 annually. With a portion of these cost savings, the Department hired a consultant to conduct one-time research and analysis on best practices within K-3 Reading Assessments and make recommendations to the Department’s Assessment Team as to whether changes in the current state assessment system are needed for both the Idaho Reading Indicator and the Idaho Reading Indicator Alternate Assessment. The State Department of Education will receive the report from the consultant in February 2014. Upon receipt of the report, the Assessment Division and IRI Steering Committee will meet and decide next steps. The remaining savings will also go back to the districts for fall and spring IRI testing and the (Extended Reading Intervention Program) required 40 hours of intervention for those students scoring intensive on the fall IRI.

Information Regarding IRI Scoring for 2012-2013:

Cut scores for each subtest assessed on the IRI did remain the same. The cut scores were originally established from the AIMSweb Aggregate Norms. The Edformation Normative Performance Tables are calculated using the AIMSweb Pro student database. The information is presented by percentile rank and by fall and spring benchmark periods. Students scoring in the 50th percentile and above range were considered to be Benchmark/Proficient (3) using the AIMSweb Aggregate Norms. Students who performed from the 49th percentile to the 25th percentile were in the Strategic range (2). Those scoring at 24th percentile and below were considered Intensive (1).

IRI Subtests by Grade Level

	Fall	Spring
Kindergarten	Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) Letter Sound Fluency (LSF)	Letter Sound Fluency (LSF) Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)
1st Grade	Letter Sound Fluency (LSF) Reading Curriculum Based Measure (RCBM)	Reading Curriculum Based Measure (RCBM) Letter Sound Fluency (LSF)
2nd and 3rd Grade	Reading Curriculum Based Measure (RCBM)	Reading Curriculum Based Measure (RCBM)

FUNDING

Funding for the Reading Initiative started at \$3.3 million in 2001. Funding for the 2012-2013 fiscal year was \$2.2 million. Funding for the 2013-2014 school year is \$2.1 million. Superintendent Luna is requested flat funding for Fiscal Year 2015.

In 2013, the Task Force for Improving Education published a recommendation related to literacy proficiency. Specifically, the Task Force stated, “We recommend students demonstrate mastery of literacy before moving on to significant content learning. Reading proficiency is a major benchmark in a student’s education. Students must learn to read before they can read to learn content in other subject areas.” Based on this recommendation, Superintendent Luna has requested an additional \$50,000 in the FY2015 public schools budget to be used to establish a Technical Advisory Committee to study the implementation of this recommendation. Among its tasks, the Technical Advisory Committee will look at the current Reading Initiative, how funding is spent, and the results to see if changes need to be made in the future.

TRAINING

Professional Development for Educators:

The Department provided nine (9) webinars in the summer of 2012 on the new IRI Web Application. All state IRI Coordinators and administrators were required to participate in one of the provided webinars. The training’s provided a brief overview of the IRI Background, IRI Analysis – why the state did not renew their contract with AIMSweb, finance, and the re-evaluation of SDE needs and how the IRI can support the new Learning Management System; how the old process worked vs. the new process, and how to register, access, and input IRI scores into the new system. Each webinar was recorded and archived on the IRI training website.

The Department will continue to offer the necessary training and professional development for educators focusing on using scientifically based reading assessments to identify and monitor at-risk students in the area of reading. Educators will continue to use information from IRI data to create differentiated instructional reading groups and make informed choices about core reading instruction and intervention practices. The Department will continue to offer professional development on understanding IRI data and how to use the data effectively and efficiently in their classrooms as well as intervention programs to help those “at risk” students. Trainings will be provided through webinars and via the Idaho Education Network.

CONCLUSION

The state reading effort remains vital to schools as it provides resources for early identification of students at risk of reading failure and provides schools the resources to help those children succeed.